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QUESTION OF THE COMORIAN ISLAND OF MAYOTTE

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 90th plenary meeting, on 20 December 1978, the General Assembly, having been unable for lack of time to consider the item entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte", decided to include the item in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session (decision 33/435).

2. On 1 May 1979, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Comoros and to the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, drawing their attention to the decision of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General invited them to provide him with any additional information, pertaining to negotiations for a settlement of this question, for inclusion in his report to the General Assembly. The information received from the two Governments is reproduced below.

II. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF FRANCE

3. In a meeting with a representative of the Secretary-General on 10 July 1979, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations handed an aide-mémoire stating the following:

"During the past year, the following developments have occurred in Franco-Comorian relations:

"On 1 July 1978, diplomatic relations were established between France and the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. The Ambassador of the Comoros in Paris presented his credentials to the President of the French Republic on 30 November. The French Embassy in Moroni was opened on 4 October by a Chargé d'Affaires, and the Ambassador took up his post in the following February.

"On 10 November 1978, agreements governing co-operation between the two Governments were signed in Paris. These agreements comprise:

- A Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation;
- An Agreement on co-operation in economic and financial matters;
- An Agreement on co-operation in the field of culture and education;
- A Convention concerning assistance in personnel;
- An Agreement on co-operation with respect to defence and military technical assistance.

The signing of these agreements enabled France to provide assistance to the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, especially in the economic, financial and cultural fields.

"Contacts have recently taken place between the heads of the two countries. President Ahmed Abdallah made several visits to the French capital in recent months, when he was received by the President of the French Republic. The French Minister for Co-operation made an official visit to Moroni from 3 to 6 July 1979.

"In view of these developments and of its position of principle with regard to resolution 32/7 adopted by the General Assembly on 1 November 1977, the French Government can only reaffirm its opposition to the inclusion of the question of Mayotte in the agenda of the General Assembly."

4. On 7 November 1979, the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed a letter to the Secretary-General in which, as a supplement to the aide-mémoire of 10 July 1979, he stated the following:

... I have the honour to inform you that, on 24 October, the French Government decided to propose to the Government of the Comoros that talks should be held at a ministerial level on various aspects of the as yet unresolved Franco-Comorian difficulties and on ways of strengthening economic and human relations between Mayotte and the other islands of the archipelago.

"The Government of the Comoros replied favourably to that proposal and talks can therefore be arranged soon."

III. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE DELEGATION OF THE FEDERAL ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF THE COMOROS TO THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5. In a meeting with a representative of the Secretary-General on 2 October 1979, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Comoros handed a note verbale stating the following:

/...

"The Government of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros has endorsed, and accordingly has decided to comply with, the decisions and recommendations contained in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and by other international bodies on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

"With reference to General Assembly resolution 32/7, which recommended that collective efforts should be made by the parties concerned with a view to settling the question by means of negotiation, the Government of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros has endeavoured to date to create the necessary conditions and a suitable climate which could genuinely lead to an active phase of negotiations and thus accelerate the achievement of a just and equitable solution to the problem in the interest of the Comorian people.

"Constructive action has thus been taken by the Comorian Government on two main levels:

"(1) On the internal level. The Comorian State decided to adopt a new Constitution of the federal type which, while respecting the unity of the Republic, grants considerable autonomy to each island. This was necessary for two fundamental reasons:

"The first and most important reason was to meet the wishes of the inhabitants of Mayotte for greater autonomy in the management of their administrative affairs within the Archipelago.

"The second was the need to decentralize the Comorian administration as much as possible and thus to overcome or attenuate the difficulties inherent in the situation of the Comoros as an island country.

"In accordance with the Constitution of the Comoros, each island is thus placed under the administrative responsibility of a governor, who is a native of the island and is elected by universal suffrage for a term of five (5) years.

"A suitable framework has thus been created by the Comorian authorities to facilitate the reintegration of the island of Mayotte, which is thus assured, on its return to the Comorian State, of enjoying the same rights as the three other Comorian islands (Anjouan, Moheli and Grande Comore), including the right to have its own administrative autonomy while respecting the unity of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros in order to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoros.

"(2) On the External Level.

"With France: The Heads of State of France and the Comoros have held talks during which they have agreed to reconsider the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte with a view to finding a satisfactory solution.

"With the international community:

"(a) At its sixteenth session, the Assembly of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity renewed its support for the Comorian people in the determination they had shown to secure the return of the island of Mayotte to the Comorian State and requested the Government of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, in collaboration with the Committee of Seven of the Organization of African Unity, to accelerate the process which had been undertaken with a view to the final settlement of the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

"(b) The Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Havana (Cuba), like the Fifth Conference, held at Colombo, reaffirmed that the island of Mayotte belonged to the Republic of the Comoros. The Sixth Conference also welcomed the decision taken at the highest level by the Organization of African Unity at Monrovia (Liberia) and appealed to France to comply with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

"The Comorian delegation is convinced that this series of measures and this action taken by the Government of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros are of such a nature as to create the necessary conditions and a favourable climate to enable the two parties to enter into a genuine phase of negotiations.

"The Comorian party declares itself ready to enter into such negotiations at the earliest possible date. It also hopes that the United Nations, in close collaboration with the Organization of African Unity, will continue to be associated with the search for a solution to the problem."

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

6. The Secretary-General has taken note of the information provided by the Governments of the Comoros and France, particularly with regard to their positions on the question of Mayotte and on the improved state of relations between their two countries.

7. The Secretary-General has informed the parties concerned of his readiness to continue his efforts in favour of a settlement of this question.
